

Listing of Claims:

1. (Previously presented) A method for providing traceability of mail pieces, comprising the steps of:

creating a plurality of mail pieces;

providing a first source tracing code on each of said plurality of mail pieces, said first source tracing code corresponding to a mail producer;

creating a mailing statement for said plurality of mail pieces;

providing a second source tracing code on said mailing statement, said second source tracing code corresponding to the mail producer;

submitting said plurality of mail pieces and the mailing statement to a postal service facility;

and

verifying that said first source tracing code corresponds to said second source tracing code, such that verified mail pieces can be directly traced back to the mail producer by reading the first source tracing code;

wherein the mail producer is identified directly by reading the first source tracing code without accessing the mailing statement.

2. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 1, wherein the step of verifying includes the steps of:

reading said mailing statement to read said second tracing code; and

scanning at least a sampling of said plurality of mail pieces to read said first tracing code.

3. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the mail pieces define certain characteristics, and wherein said first tracing code further corresponds to the characteristics of the

mail pieces, wherein the first tracing code is independent of a meter imprint, digital postage mark or postal indicia.

4. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said first tracing code is embedded into a digital image, a text, a watermark, paper fibers or invisible ink, independent of a meter imprint, digital postage mark or postal indicia.

5-7. (Canceled)

8. (Currently amended) A method for providing traceability of mail pieces, comprising the steps of:

creating a plurality of mail pieces;

providing a first source tracing code on each of said plurality of mail pieces, said first source tracing code corresponding to a mail producer;

creating a mailing statement for said plurality of mail pieces;

providing a second source tracing code on said mailing statement, said second source tracing code corresponding to the first source tracing code;

submitting said plurality of mail pieces and the mailing statement to a postal service facility;

capturing and recording an identity of an individual submitting said plurality of mail pieces and the mailing statement; and

storing the first or second source tracing code in association with the recorded identity of the individual;

wherein the identity of the individual submitting the mail pieces and the mail producer are identified directly by reading the first source tracing code without accessing the mailing statement.

9. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 1, wherein the step of providing a first tracing code on each of said plurality of mail pieces includes the step of passing each of said plurality of mail pieces through tracing code producing equipment, independent of a meter.

10. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 2, wherein the first tracing code is independent from a meter imprint, digital postage mark or postal indicia.

11. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 2, further comprising the step of providing an alert indication when said first tracing code does not correspond to said second tracing code.

12. (Previously presented) A method for providing traceability of mail pieces, comprising the steps of:

creating a plurality of mail pieces via mail production equipment;

providing a source tracing code on each of the plurality of mail pieces via source tracing code producing equipment, the source tracing code corresponding to a creator of the plurality of mail pieces;

scanning each of the plurality of mail pieces to read the source tracing code;

verifying that the source tracing code corresponds to the creator of the mail pieces; and

creating a mailing statement for the plurality of mail pieces via mailing statement producing equipment, the mailing statement including a corresponding source tracing code corresponding to the source tracing code on each of the plurality of mail pieces, such that verified mail pieces can be directly traced back to the creator of the mail pieces by reading the source tracing code on the mail pieces;

wherein the creator of the mail pieces is identified directly by reading the encrypted source tracing code on the mail pieces without accessing the mailing statement.

13. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 12, further comprising the steps of:

submitting the plurality of mail pieces and the mailing statement to a postal service facility; scanning the mailing statement to read the corresponding source tracing code; scanning at least a sampling of the plurality of mail pieces to read the source tracing code on the mail pieces; and verifying that the source tracing code on the mail pieces corresponds to the corresponding source tracing code.

14. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 12, wherein the source tracing code on the mail pieces is embedded into a digital image, a text, a watermark, paper fibers or invisible ink, independent of a meter imprint, digital postage mark or postal indicia.

15. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 12, further comprising the steps of capturing and recording the identity of an individual submitting the plurality of mail; storing the source tracing code on the mail pieces or the corresponding source tracing code in association with the recorded identity of the individual; and subsequently using the source tracing code on the mail pieces or the corresponding source tracing code to trace at least one of the plurality of mail pieces back to at least one of the individual submitting the mail pieces and the creator of the mail pieces.

16. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 12, wherein the source tracing code on the mail pieces is independent from a meter imprint, digital postage mark or postal indicia.

17. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 13, further comprising the step of providing an alert indication when the source tracing code on the mail pieces does not correspond to the corresponding source tracing code.

18. (Currently amended) A method for providing traceability of mail pieces, comprising the steps of:

receiving at least one mail piece and a mailing statement at a postal service facility; capturing and storing the identity of an individual submitting the at least one mail piece; providing a source tracing code on the at least one mail piece and the mailing statement via source tracing code producing equipment, after the at least one mail piece and the mailing statement has been submitted to the postal facility, the source tracing code on the at least one mail ~~piece~~ piece corresponding to the source tracing code on the mailing statement; and

storing information produced by the source tracing code producing equipment in association with the captured and stored identity of the individual submitting the at least one mail piece and the mailing statement;

wherein the identity of the individual is identified directly by reading the source tracing code on ~~to-trace~~ the at least one mail piece without accessing the mailing statement.

19-20. (Canceled)

21. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 18, wherein the step of capturing and storing the identity of an individual comprises the step of recording at least one physical characteristic of the individual submitting the at least one mail piece via recording equipment.

22. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 21, wherein the recording equipment comprises camera equipment, video equipment, finger print equipment or retina scan equipment.

23. (Canceled)

24. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 8, wherein the step of capturing and recording the identity of an individual comprises the step of recording at least one physical characteristic of the individual.

25. (Canceled)

26. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 11, further comprising the step of tracing the first or second tracing code back to the mail producer to determine a reason why the first tracing code does not correspond to the second tracing code.

27. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 15, wherein the step of capturing and recording the identity of an individual comprises the step of recording at least one physical characteristic of the individual.

28. (Canceled)

29. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 17, further comprising the step of tracing the source tracing code or the corresponding source tracing code back to the creator of the mail pieces to determine a reason why the source tracing code does not correspond to the corresponding source tracing code.

30. (Previously presented) A method for providing traceability of mail pieces, comprising the steps of:

providing a tracing code corresponding to a mail producer;

marking at least one envelope with the tracing code to produce at least one mail piece;

marking a mailing statement for the at least one envelope with a corresponding tracing code;

recording the identity of the mail producer in association with the tracing code;

receiving the at least one mail piece at a postal service facility; and

reading the tracing code on the at least one mail piece and the corresponding tracing code on the mailing statement to verify the mail producer, wherein the mail producer is identified directly by reading the tracing code on the at least one envelope without accessing the mailing statement.

31. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 30, further comprising the steps of:

capturing and storing the identity of an individual submitting the at least one mail piece to the postal facility in association with the tracing code; and

subsequently using the tracing code to trace the at least one mail piece back to the individual.

32. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 30, further comprising the step of tracing the tracing code back to the mail producer.

33. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 30, further comprising the step of providing an alert indication when the mail producer cannot be verified.